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PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Letter dated 5 June 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly

At its 389th meeting, on 3 June 1996, the Committee on Conferences considered the proposed convening by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples of a Pacific regional seminar to review the political, economic and social conditions in the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, from 12 to 14 June 1996. While the holding of the seminar had been approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/39 of 6 December 1995 and provision had been made for the substantive servicing of the seminar in the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (section 2), the seminar had not in fact been included in the official calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations issued in March 1996 (A/AC.172/1996/2) owing to the lack of information on its dates and venue at that time.

During the discussion on the matter, the view was expressed that by convening the three-day seminar at Port Moresby, rather than at the headquarters of the Special Committee in New York, the United Nations would not be making efficient use of its limited financial resources, a course of action that would, moreover, be perceived negatively outside the Organization. Furthermore, as the members of the Committee on Conferences had not been apprised of the seminar prior to approving the calendar of conferences and meetings, they had not had the opportunity to review and debate the matter.

In reply to a query concerning the expenses involved, the Secretariat informed members that the cost of convening the seminar at Headquarters amounted to $173,335; the cost of convening it at Port Moresby amounted to $130,446.

The view was expressed that the figures provided were in fact cost estimates made on the basis of full participation and that accurate costing

required a review of participation over the past five years. The view was also expressed that there was no reason to hold the seminar in New York if no savings were involved.

Following a debate on the matter, the Committee on Conferences took the decision to inform the General Assembly that no agreement had been reached within the Committee to recommend that the Assembly include in the calendar of conferences and meetings for 1996 the Pacific regional seminar with Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, as its venue.

The Committee on Conferences requests the President of the General Assembly to bring the concerns expressed in the present letter to the attention of the General Assembly.

(Signed) El Hassane ZAHID
Chairman
Committee on Conferences